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## A Nuclear Power Plant May be Coming Near You Soon: Governor Beshear Attempts to Lift Thirty Year Ban in Kentucky (/full-blog/stearns)

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In 1984, Kentucky banned the construction of nuclear power facilities in the Commonwealth until the Public Service Commission finds that the federal government has identified a means for the disposal of nuclear waste.[i] This ban was a reaction the Three Mile Island incident in Pennsylvania where a partial meltdown became the worst nuclear plant disaster in United States history.[ii] As of today, the United States' attempts to dispose of high-level nuclear waste have not succeeded. However, there has been a recent push by political leaders in Kentucky to lift the ban in the state and begin development in nuclear energy.



(<http://www.wdrb.com/story/26396259/gov-beshear-supports-lifting-ban-on-nuclear-power-plants-in-ky>)

Governor Steve Beshear is one of the leading advocates in lifting the ban in Kentucky. Gov. Beshear is pressing Kentucky legislators to lift the ban so conversations can begin with companies about possibilities in the future for nuclear energy in the state.[iii] During a press conference, Gov. Beshear stated, "Nuclear energy is here to stay in

the world, and how we employ it and how we utilize it is going to continue to develop.”[iv] The Kentucky Governor is receiving some supporters for his push to lift the ban, including Representative David Floyd of District Fifty.[v] In support of lifting the ban, Rep. Floyd emphasized the new improvements and developments in nuclear energy in recent years and the high efficiency of producing energy in this manner. [vi]

Conversely, several political leaders and Kentucky groups continue to oppose the idea of allowing nuclear power plants to enter the state. Representative Tom Riner stated that Beshear’s plan to lift the ban is “a huge accident waiting to happen.” [vii] Rep. Riner pointed to disasters such as the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, suggesting natural disasters, mechanical and human failure, and even terrorism make the risk too great. [viii] Furthermore, advocacy groups such as the Kentucky Resources Council strongly oppose Gov. Beshear’s plan for both environmental and safety reasons.[ix]

Though political leaders continue to debate the issue, the risks associated with nuclear energy outweigh the benefits for Kentucky. Since the federal government has not yet found a method to dispose of nuclear waste, Gov. Beshear and his supporters would allow nuclear plants in Kentucky as long as a waste plan is in place in compliance with federal law, such as securing the waste at the power plants.[x] The method of waste-storage presents several homeland security concerns and can pose human and ecological risks for centuries and beyond. [xi] Moreover, the United States has already seen the disasters that nuclear energy may bring. The Three Mile Island accident was attributed to equipment malfunction, design-related problems, and human error, which led to a partial meltdown and releases of radioactivity. [xii] Such issues and unsolved problems with nuclear energy make it clear that this is not something needed in Kentucky and the ban on the construction of power plants in the Commonwealth should remain.

[i] Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 278.605 (West 2010).

[ii] Lawrence Smith, *Gov. Beshear Supports Lifting Ban on Nuclear Power Plants in KY*, WDRB (Aug. 28, 2014, 3:13 PM), <http://www.wdrb.com/story/26396259/gov-beshear-supports-lifting-ban-on-nuclear-power-plants-in-ky> (<http://www.wdrb.com/story/26396259/gov-beshear-supports-lifting-ban-on-nuclear-power-plants-in-ky>).

[iii] Erik A. Carlson, *Beshear Still Pushing for End to State Ban on Nuclear Energy*, BusinessLexington (Sept. 26, 2014), <http://bizlex.com/2014/09/beshear-still-pushing-for-end-to-state-ban-on-nuclear-energy/> (<http://bizlex.com/2014/09/beshear-still-pushing-for-end-to-state-ban-on-nuclear-energy/>).

[iv] *Id.*

[v] Smith, *supra* note ii.

[vi] *Id.*

[vii] *Id.*

[viii] *Id.*

[ix] James Bruggers, *Kentucky Might End Nuclear Plant Ban*, West Kentucky Journal (Feb. 25, 2008), <http://www.westkyjournal.com/news.php?viewStory=287> (<http://www.westkyjournal.com/news.php?viewStory=287>).

[x] *Id.*

[xi] Tom FitzGerald, *KY Bill to Lift Nuclear Power Plant Construction Ban Opposed*, OpenNewsNet (Mar. 6, 2008), <http://opennewsnet.blogspot.com/2008/03/bill-to-lift-nuclear-power-plant.html> (<http://opennewsnet.blogspot.com/2008/03/bill-to-lift-nuclear-power-plant.html>).

[xii] *Backgrounder on the Three Mile Island Accident*, United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission, <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/fact-sheets/3mile-isle.html> (<http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/fact-sheets/3mile-isle.html>) (last updated Apr. 25, 2014).

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